



OSCE Conference on addressing Anti-Semitism in the OSCE region

Address by OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Pia Kauma

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Mr. Chair,
Your Excellencies,
Honorable delegates,
Distinguished guests,

We convene at a moment defined by heightened concern for our Jewish communities.

The consequences of the military operations in the Gaza strip, consecutive to the unprecedented terrorist attacks by Palestinian groups against Israel on the 7th of October, ripple through our societies.

Large demonstrations across Western Europe and North America have coincided with a concerning uptick in reports of hate speech and hate crimes.

While this conflict may not be directly on the OSCE's political agenda, its far-reaching implications within our vast region demand attention and concerted action from our Organization.

This conference is such an occasion.

I thank the Chair-in-Office for gathering us all today and providing an opportunity for the OSCE family to come together to consider our efforts to combat antisemitism in this particular context.

Your Excellencies,

Let me be clear:

Antisemitism is an affront to the fundamental principles of equality, dignity, and human rights that underpin our shared values.

We must therefore unequivocally condemn it in all its manifestations.

This includes the recognition of the profound impact on our communities of historical and contemporary atrocities fueled by Jew-hatred.

This is a moral imperative.

It is also a legal and political necessity because threats to the safety and well-being of our Jewish communities undermine the very fabric of democracy and pluralism that we hold dear.

The pernicious reach of antisemitism extends far beyond.

Conspiracies often fuel hate and discrimination against other minority communities.

The same poisonous ideologies perpetuate sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination.

Recent developments compel us to redouble efforts to address the root causes and mitigate the spread of antisemitism.

As Elie Wiesel reminded us: “the opposite of love is not hate – it's indifference.”

We should therefore always be aware that antisemitism grows in the shadows of indifference and complacency.

As political leaders, we must confront this challenge head-on, not only through rhetoric, but with concrete actions and tangible results.

To do so, parliaments across the OSCE region have over the years crafted effective legislation to fight antisemitism, increasingly based on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of antisemitism.

This is not merely about enacting new laws.

It is about sending a clear and unequivocal message that hatred and intolerance have no place in our societies.

But antisemitism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that evolves and adapts to changing societal dynamics.

It thrives on ignorance, prejudice, and fear.

It employs old tropes with new, modern methods.

In recent years, new challenges have called on us to be more vigilant and proactive.

While we must continue to ensure that hate crimes and discrimination based on religious or ethnic identity are adequately prosecuted, we need to pay more attention to antisemitic disinformation and incitement, both online and offline.

We also need to ensure that future generations are given the tools to become advocates for tolerance, mutual understanding, and respect for diversity.

As Members of Parliament, we must hold ourselves and our governments accountable for implementing the necessary legislative and policy measures to comprehensively address antisemitism in all its forms.

In this regard, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly continues to play a key role in serving as a platform for the exchange of best practices among parliamentarians from across the OSCE region.

Our meetings offer opportunities for our Members to strengthen legislative frameworks, enhance law enforcement capabilities, and promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.

I am particularly grateful for the work of our Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism and Intolerance, Senator Ben Cardin, over the years.

His tireless efforts in co-operation with Rabbi Andrew Baker have been instrumental in advancing our collective efforts to combat antisemitism and intolerance across the OSCE area.

Your Excellencies,

In conclusion, please rest assured that Members of our Assembly will remain steadfast in upholding the principles of tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for human dignity which define our commitment to the OSCE.

I thank you for your attention and I look forward to our continued co-operation on this matter.